

Ks1 Pupil Referral Unit

Valley Road Primary School, Corporation Road, Hendon, Tyne and Wear, SR2 8PL

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils who attend the provision achieve well, often from low starting points. This is because staff are exceptionally skilled at supporting pupils. As a result, they make good progress academically, socially and emotionally.
- Teaching is good overall. In the majority of lessons, teachers make learning fun and pupils enjoy learning through a range of stimulating activities.
- A small number of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attend the provision. They make good progress, alongside older pupils, because staff provide a wide range of experiences and activities.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding despite the difficulties many of them face. This is because staff understand the needs of pupils well and consistently follow well-established routines. These help pupils to manage their own behaviour. As a result, pupils feel safe and are polite and caring to others.
- Despite the changes to the leadership team since the last inspection, the assistant headteacher, supported by staff and the management committee have a positive effect on ensuring good teaching and pupils' achievement. This demonstrates the provision's continuing ability to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, teachers' planning does not take into account the needs of all pupils and the work set does not match their abilities sufficiently well and learning slows.
- Teachers' marking is not yet consistently helpful and as a result, pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work.
- The progress of different groups of pupils is not always tracked closely enough. As a result, action is not always taken to ensure pupils make as much progress as they should.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed five lessons and parts of lessons taught by three teachers. A joint lesson observation was undertaken with the assistant headteacher. The inspection team also examined the quality of work in pupils' books and folders from across the provision.
- The inspection team held meetings and had discussions with senior leaders, members of the school staff, and two members of the local authority one of whom was a representative from the management committee. The inspector also collected the views of pupils during lesson observations.
- No parents made their views known to the inspection team through the online questionnaire (Parent View). However, five parents made their views known directly to the inspector on the telephone.
- The inspector studied health and safety documentation, teachers' curriculum planning, documents relating to the performance management of staff and the school's system for checking pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Key Stage 1 pupil referral unit (PRU) has undergone some change since the last inspection. It has a very strong focus on supporting children from a very young age and has introduced a twice-weekly playgroup for families with children who have identified behavioural needs.
- Further changes include the appointment of the team leader to assistant headteacher in place of the headteacher, who was also responsible for two other Pupil Referral units across the city.
- The provision is based at two sites within two primary schools. Staff also offer support, behavioural advice and training to approximately 60 primary schools and a range of other provisions in Sunderland area.
- Up to six pupils attend full time at one teaching unit and up to eight per session attend either morning or afternoon at the second teaching unit. Some pupils attend for as little as 12 weeks, others for longer to enable assessments to be carried out. Those who attend full time are in danger of being permanently excluded from their mainstream school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage with just a small number from other ethnic backgrounds.
- All pupils who attend are identified as vulnerable and have significant behavioural needs. A large proportion have identified special educational needs supported through school action plus. A smaller number have a statement of special educational needs.
- Approximately half of pupils who attend the provision are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from service families. Whilst the management committee oversee spending within the provision, they do not hold the budget nor do they have access to pupil premium monies which currently remain within the budgets of pupils' mainstream schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - improving teachers' use of their knowledge of pupils' attainment to make sure work set is at an accurate level for all pupils and is not too easy or too hard
 - ensuring that when teachers mark pupils' books they give them consistent guidance on how to improve their work.
- Increase the achievement of pupils by:
 - ensuring that the progress of different groups of pupils is more accurately checked and monitored so that action is taken when needed and teachers have a clearer picture of pupils' progress and attainment.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The majority of pupils who attend the provision achieve well socially, emotionally and academically. As a result, 85% successfully return to mainstream schools. This is because staff are highly skilled at supporting the behavioural needs of their pupils and all groups, including those known to be eligible for pupil premium, make equally good progress.
- A small number of younger children are of an age when they would be taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a mainstream school. They are taught in mixed-age classes with older pupils but with good access to activities that are appropriate for their age and experience. These include a wide range of both indoor and outdoor activities that encourage learning through investigation and play. As a result, they make good progress, often from low starting points, particularly in communication and early literacy skills.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress because activities are successfully tailored to their interests and range of difficulties in both English and mathematics. An example of this was seen in a mathematics lesson where pupils with a range of abilities were improving their understanding of numbers. The opening action song involved pupils counting down from 10 and was clearly enjoyed by all. Their happy smiles and cooperation showed a great enthusiasm for learning. Their tasks sustained their enthusiasm and all made good progress towards their learning targets.
- Parents agree that their children make good progress. A comment made by one summed up the views of others: 'My child is enjoying school now because staff have been just brilliant at helping him to settle down and learn.'
- Staff ensure that pupils develop a love of books and improve their reading skills. Regular reading sessions conducted in a relaxed and caring environment at the start of each afternoon are appreciated by all. Consequently, pupils' reading and comprehension skills improve and some reach standards above those expected for their age.
- All pupils who attend the provision have social, emotional and behavioural needs. Many also have communication difficulties and a small number have or are waiting for a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Through a range of strategies, including pictures showing the daily timetable and the use of signs and symbols, these barriers to pupils' learning are reduced and the majority make good progress academically, socially and emotionally.
- Overall attainment is low for the majority of pupils, including those known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. Of this group, those known to be eligible for free school meals make the same good progress as those who are not eligible for free school meals. Attainment is low because of pupils' identified disabilities or special educational needs but is rising as staff fire up pupils' enthusiasm for learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- Overall teaching is good in most lessons. Learning in many lessons is interesting and fun and teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children are offered an imaginative range of activities and opportunities to learn through first-hand experiences and play. Improvements to the outdoor area ensure that opportunities for learning are equally good both indoors and outdoors.
- Teachers are good at providing activities to tackle pupils' specific learning difficulties. For example, they are particularly effective at improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards learning. As a result, once pupils settle to classroom routines and enjoy learning they make good and sometimes better progress.
- However, in some lessons teachers do not use fully their knowledge of pupils' current attainment

to plan learning. As a result, pupils do not always make as much progress as they could, because staff do not always set work at the right level.

- Despite this staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. An example of this was seen in a personal, social and health education lesson, where pupils were focussed on describing their feelings. One pupil described being happy as, 'A feeling in my tummy like its having a party.' The teacher asked pupils to look at their reflections in a mirror as they smiled. Some were surprised by what they saw and practised smiling at each other. This well-organised, insightful and sensitively taught lesson enabled these very young pupils to think about their feelings and to begin to put into words how different emotions felt.
- Teachers and support staff work closely as a team in classrooms. All have good subject knowledge of literacy and mathematics. As a result, these subjects are taught well and despite the wide range of abilities found in many classrooms, all groups of pupils make equally good progress in both English and mathematics.
- Much of the feedback given to pupils on the quality of their work is given orally by staff who are working alongside them. This is most effective because of the young age of pupils and the small size of the groups. When written feedback is given, it does not always give pupils a clear idea of how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils clearly enjoy coming to the provision as evidenced by their happy smiles as they arrive with their escorts. Attendance is high for many pupils, and improves for many when they settle in at the provision.
- The provision is for much of the time a very calm and orderly place. This is because, despite their high level of need, pupils learn to behave exceptionally well both inside and outside the classroom. Lunchtimes are very well organised, and staff work effectively to ensure pupils play harmoniously and happily together.
- Parents spoken to say that they feel school is exceptionally good at keeping their children safe. Frequent trips out of the provision and road safety training enable staff to ensure pupils are exceptionally clear about how to stay safe.
- Pupils feel very safe when they attend the provision and no type of persistent bullying is common in the school. If an incident does occur, staff sort it out immediately.
- Schools that are supported by the team from the provision are unanimous in their praise of the work of the team who they describe as, 'Always going the extra mile to support them and their pupils.'
- Through exceptional partnerships with health care professionals, including the child and adolescent mental health team, pupils receive excellent support and guidance on how to improve their behaviour.
- Staff focus relentlessly on supporting pupils' personal and social development from a very young age. This increases pupils' self-esteem and belief in their own abilities. As a result, their behaviour and eagerness to learn improves significantly. This is reflected in the excellent record of not excluding any pupil in the last three years.

The leadership and management are good

- Despite the recent departure of the headteacher, who was responsible for the strategic management of the provision, the assistant headteacher, supported by her small team of teachers and the management committee, has successfully undertaken her role and have continued to improve the school's performance.
- The enthusiasm and commitment of all team members are continuing to improve pupils' achievement. The checks made on pupils' progress enable staff to have an overview of

performance in the school. However, the checks on the progress of different groups of pupils is not yet undertaken on a regular basis. As a result, comparisons between the performance of different groups is not precise enough to ensure that all make as much progress as possible and that help is provided where it is most needed.

- Under the current leadership team, plans to improve the school are clear. Success can be seen in the response to the previous inspection and all concerns raised have been successfully addressed. The focus on improving the behaviour of very young children has been successfully addressed through the twice-weekly playgroup which helps parents who have children with behavioural difficulties.
 - Systems to monitor teaching are effective, although some variations remain. Teachers are set performance targets linked closely to school priorities and pupils' progress. The assistant headteacher uses this information to make decisions on teachers' pay. This has contributed to the good teaching that has been maintained since the last inspection.
 - The curriculum is focussed on the needs of individual pupils. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught alongside older pupils, but because of heavy emphasis on learning through play for all children, their needs are equally well met. A creative approach to the curriculum offers pupils of all abilities a wide range of experiences, which increases pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. For example, pupils enjoy celebrating religious festivals from a variety of different faiths. This was evidenced by their recent comparisons made between the Jewish festival of Hanukkah and the Christian festival of Christmas.
 - The small numbers of pupils who are from other ethnic groups make equal progress because of the provision's continuous commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils.
 - Since the last inspection, the local authority has offered the provision light touch support and has retained a presence on the management committee.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The provision shares the management committee with two other pupil referral units. Despite this shared approach, the management committee is clear about the strengths and areas for improvement within the provision. They review data to check on pupils' progress and are well informed about the quality of teaching. The diverse set of skills which members hold ensures that they offer a good level of support and challenge. They set ambitious targets for the assistant headteacher and monitor the performance of other staff. As a result, the pupils' good achievement has been maintained since the last inspection. Whilst the management committee oversee spending within the provision, they do not hold the budget nor do they have access to pupil premium monies which currently remain within the budgets of pupils' mainstream schools. The management committee ensures all safeguarding provision meets current requirements.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135639
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	402725

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Shillinglaw
Headteacher	Karen Potts
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2010
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Email address	karen.potts@schools.sunderland.gov.uk

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